Hey, Teach! is dedicated to developing the philosophies and ideas of aspiring teachers. We’re online at heyteachvictoriacollege.wordpress.com & heyteach@utoronto.ca!

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Hey, TEACH!
The Victoria College Education Magazine

Education: Past, Present, Future

Feature interview on Reconciliation and Residential Schools

With Professor Don Jackson, Founding Director (1979-2012), Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (SRSC), Algoma University, Sault Ste. Marie ON.

“Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, teacher training in Ontario has changed significantly, and continues to evolve today.”

...AND MORE!

In this issue...

Teacher Education Through the Times

Teacher Education Through the Times

“Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, teacher training in Ontario has changed significantly, and continues to evolve today.”
The future of schooling has always been a popular topic. On-going debates on curriculum, pedagogy and teaching practices reveal our desire to educate students as best as possible.

However, our examination of the past is often lost in discussing the future of education. This issue of HeyTeach! takes a moment to step back into history. Looking at the pendulum of education, we try to make sense of where today’s schools came from.

Within this collection of articles, you will find works from educators - seasoned, new, and aspiring. The diversity of our writers is reflected in the issues they cover. Our articles examine both personal experiences of schooling, and Canada’s at large. Our Feature Interview with Dr. Don Jackson on residential schooling illustrates this intersection of personal and national histories. Conducted by Victoria College students Jimmy Qiu and Sophia Kostanski, this interview bridges the present with the past, studying Canada’s residential school system, and a new cross-cultural initiative, the Shingwauk Project on “healing, sharing, and learning.” Through poetry and prose our writers explore teacher education, accessibility in the classroom, self-directed learning, and much more, offering a coverage on the histories of schooling as wide and large as the history itself.

I would like to thank everyone who has dedicated their time to this issue. From writing, editing and design, our magazine would not be possible without the effort and commitment of our contributors.

Thank you for picking up a copy of this magazine. I hope you grab yourself a warm drink, find a cozy seat and enjoy.

Sincerely,

Rija Saleem
Editor-In-Chief
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Hey, Teach! Spring 2017
brush hair  
like brushing pebbles  
from the edge of the sand—  
leaving scuff marks  
as our feet twist within the howling landscape—

dark pebbles and loose shrines  
that wilt as fine as grass  
in the middle of the road,

with purple grape-seeds inside the flesh of the ripe,  
burning horizons tug another attempt to draw—

past people who barely scratched the surface  
and decided it wasn’t worth the venture—  
are pebbles which barely make a splash  
before sinking—

remember,  
you are the universe wrapped up  
in a bottled shell,  
waiting to be released—

we are poets of this world  
who trace our steps within the ocean  
trying to find the pebbles  
which belong to us

Vivian Li
University can be an intense environment. Especially during midterms when some students may begin to wonder: Why am I learning this? How practical is such knowledge? What’s the purpose of university education that makes me struggle?

The following are two examples of students coming to that understanding:

1. A mock International English language Testing System (IELTS) oral speaking test with the topic of time management

   *Shaohan*: “Good time management can make people work more efficiently.”

   *Jessica*: “Sorry, I might hear the wrong word but do you mind translating the vocab ‘有效率的’ (Chinese meaning of ‘efficient’) in English for me?”

   *Shaohan*: “Efficiency.”

   *Jessica*: “So you mean efficiency is an adverb?”

   Shaohan contemplated for a while and gave me a firm confirmation, “Yes. I think so. Isn’t ‘efficiency’ an adverb?”

   Then I briefly explained the differences between “efficiently” and “efficiency” to her.

   At the end, this is what she said: “Wow, I’ve never realized I use those words incorrectly.”

2. Discussion about my visual analysis essay in the writing center

   *Jessica*: “Why does ‘social reputation’ sound awkward?”

   *Susan*: “I think it’s because the word ‘reputation’ already includes the meaning ‘social.’ This is why putting ‘social’ before ‘reputation’ sounds quite redundant.”

   *Jessica*: “Can I use ‘gamer’s’ to show possession?”

   *Susan*: “I believe you can but the thing is, I’m not sure if the field still use it in this way these day. You’d better Google it and browse some articles in this field. You know that language keeps renewing itself, right? I recently received an email from my student who literally wrote, ‘R u…’ and I’ve never seen this kind of writing before.”

So what?

The more academic discussions I have with people, the more I realize how much I have to learn. There are so many “Oh no, never thought about this before” moments in my university life. I suppose I should say thank you to the essays, midterms, and assignments that make me struggle. Thanks to them, I am pushed to advance my thinking—questioning professors’ ambiguous lecture materials, discovering how to write essays, and becoming open about new information. I’m forced to jump out of my comfort zone. I’m forced to see beyond the scope of my thinking. In other words, education helps breaking the existing framework and makes me feel less ignorant. Education is, after all, the most valuable thing in the world.”

“The only thing more expensive than education is ignorance.” —Benjamin Franklin
The foundation of teachers’ professional practice is the education received at teachers’ college. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, teacher training in Ontario has changed significantly, and continues to evolve today. These historical and contemporary shifts hold significant implications for future teacher education.

The requirements to become a teacher candidate in Ontario during the mid-1800s were quite different than they are today. Prior to the creation of the “normal school,” teaching positions were filled by various individuals who often lacked adequate qualifications. Teachers
were hired based on who incurred less expense for trustees (Richter, 2006, p. 1). Certified teacher education began with the establishment of Normal Schools. The world’s first Normal School appeared in 1794, with the École Normale Supérieure (or Normal Superior School) in Paris, France (Encylopaedia Britannica, 2016). The term was derived from norms established for schools and teachers, in order to provide children with quality education (PBS). The first Normal School in Ontario was established in 1847 (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2017). To enroll in the Normal School, potential teacher candidates needed to possess literacy skills, basic arithmetic skills, and a letter from a clergyman to verify their moral character (Richter, 2006, p. 1); official certification would only start to be issued in 1853 (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2017). These requirements contrast expectations of teacher candidates today. Contemporary teacher candidates in Ontario require, at a minimum, completion of an undergraduate degree before pursuing a Bachelor of Education and teacher certification. This shift in academic expectations reflects the changing social perspectives surrounding teaching over the late 19th and 20th centuries, as the profession was regarded with more significance.

Teacher education is a dynamic field. In Ontario, requirements of teacher education are continuously evolving. In 2015, OISE ceased admittance to their Bachelor of Education program, in favour of the more rigorous Master of Teaching and Master of Arts programs for teacher certification. (Bradshaw, 2014). Previously, the BEd consisted of one year of study, which then expanded into two years for programs across Ontario (“Rivals rip U of T over master’s plan for would-be teachers,” 2014). Rather than extending the time 1,167 students would spend pursuing their BEd, however, OISE chose to introduce 500 more spots for new students across their Masters’ programs (which also consist of two years of study) (Bradshaw, 2014).

OISE’s decision to phase out the BEd raises several important questions for consideration. Is this change indicative of further transformations to teacher training and certification? Could we see this shift occurring with Ontario’s other teacher training programs soon? What are the implications of these ongoing changes for teacher candidates?

The answers to these questions depend on goals associated with the particular change. Consider The Common School Act, 1846. Drafted by Egerton Ryerson, the Act intended to
implement formal training for teacher candidates in Ontario (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2017). *The Common School Act* introduced the establishment of the first Ontario Normal School in 1847 (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2017). Subsequently, *The School Act of 1853* passed, providing graduates of the Ontario Normal School with certification (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2017). These institutional shifts formalized teacher education in Ontario, eventually leading to the postsecondary system that is now in place. We may be witnessing a similar change today, with OISE shifting its focus to teacher education through the Master of Teaching and Master of Arts.

Education and teacher training are constantly evolving. The move towards Normal Schools and formal teacher certification in the mid-1800s signified a monumental shift in teacher education, the effects of which continue to be seen today. We may currently be experiencing a similar shift, with OISE’s decision to phase out the Bachelor of Education for the graduate level training programs. As time progresses, we will gain a clearer understanding of the impact these shifts will have on teacher education and teacher candidates.

**Above:** An example of a “First Class Certificate of Qualification as a Common School Teacher” from 1854.

**References**


To gain insight into some of the history of education, I chose to interview my father, who attended private co-ed primary school in the Philippines from 1965 to 1971.

**What was the most valuable thing you learned?**
I learned how to engage and interact with different people. I met all sorts of characters and personalities, people from different backgrounds and experiences. We agreed and we disagreed. I learned how to be sociable. I think learning to interact with others was the most valuable, because it’s a life skill I still use today.

**What was the least valuable?**
Well, I studied in a school that also taught mandatory Chinese subjects, such as Chinese history, calligraphy, etc. I felt that was unnecessary, because I haven’t been able to use the things I learned in those classes. The way the material was taught was very disciplined, and I don’t feel it enhanced my education in any way.

**What was valued more – knowing ‘how’ (increasing skills) or knowing ‘what’ (memorization and regurgitation of information for a test or exam)?**
There was a lot of memorization and regurgitation of information. It was more about testing one’s memory of what the teacher said. It would have been nice to develop skills beyond that.

**What was your favourite activity?**
Recess. Or any group activities in class. We could play and interact with each other, which we couldn’t do much of otherwise.

**What was your least favourite activity?**
Calligraphy class. It was mandatory, and you had to repeat an assignment over and over until you got it perfect. There’s a certain
artistry that comes with calligraphy, an elegance. For people who don’t have that skill or talent, it was very frustrating.

**How did you feel about school in general?**
I liked school, because I got to meet a lot of people and play during recess. I made a lot of friends, and it was nice to socialize.

**Do you have a theory of how schools should be now?**
I think they should be experiential, more hands-on, sort of like Montessori-style schools. I know a lot of people who went to a Montessori school, and they seem to have received a more well-rounded education. I was taught mainly how to memorize things and write exams. It would be nice if schools worked to teach students how to learn in different ways!
Canadian residential schools took children away from their families in an attempt to assimilate them into Canadian culture. Children were meant to give up their place of belonging in a family, they were meant to give up their language, their culture, their identities. When we hear the stories of survivors, we hear that crimes such as physical and emotional abuse, and sexual violence, were not unfamiliar experiences in residential schools. These crimes were committed in the name of education, but a part of something much more nefarious.

The impact of this kind of abuse affects not only those who survived, but also their families. Trauma is intergenerational; it can be so severe that memories experienced by survivors can, due to repetition and intensity of exposure, imprint themselves onto the memories of survivors’ children (p. 329). Firsthand experience is not the only way in which trauma can be experienced. In this sense, memories can be passed down from one generation to the next, and can be recalled as if these memories are one’s own (p. 329).

Particularly when trauma consists not just of a single event, but of a series of events and experiences, present day circumstances which are either directly or ambiguously reminiscent of the original trauma can trigger feelings and memories, which bring a person back in time, as if they are re-experiencing the original event (p. 329). If a present day event is significant enough, re-traumatization can also occur, creating a second original event. This is in part why residential schools, in spite of being something of the past, continue to influence the present.

If and when abuse occurs, children must be able to count on a healthy and safe adult to teach them that they deserve respect. This adult could be a parent, another family member, or even a teacher. Today, school psychologists and private therapists are also sources upon which children are encouraged to draw. In a situation like a residential school, where students are taken away from their support systems and their primary attachment figures, abuse can become the primary model for relationship (p. 325). Oftentimes, survivors of abuse have to work to rid themselves of the negative messages they received. Sometimes, these messages, or fragments of these messages, can be passed down to children: Is it possible for me to pursue an education free of trauma and abuse?

References


Mehak Jamil, (Hons). B.A
“What is education?” I ask myself,
When I see my son picking course books
from the shelf,
From the shelf that has articles and journals as well,
All of them guaranteeing “We’ll help you excel!”
But I fail to find a book that’ll really compel,
Compel him to learn and compel him to dwell

“Is this education?” I wonder sometimes,
As I see my son studying up all night.
I ask myself if education is about being the most bright?
Getting good grades and reaching new heights?
Because I remember a world much simpler and plain
Where education meant learning, without stressing the brain,
Where education was all about knowledge gained, not memorizing stuff and getting an A,
A world where enlightenment defined education,
Not your degree or your occupation.
Everybody tells me “The system has changed”
But has it changed for good or was it in vain?

Hadia Kiani
Year 1
Rotman Commerce
When the prospect of public schooling in Ontario came to fruition, it was largely seen as a precondition to the creation of a prosperous state. The development of the modern institution of public schooling would later act as an intermediary for creating a unified society and fostering social progress. This rhetoric was coming at a time of social unrest in the late 1840s, where rebellions surfaced as a response to growing social alienation from the government. Egerton Ryerson, a prominent reformer, saw public schooling as an institution whereby any differences within society would be erased by the implementation of common principles.

What eventually occurred during the interwar years of the twentieth century was progressivism, an ideology that asserts the education system is a direct response to the changes occurring in society. Within progressivism there are three predominant themes: a concern for schools to relate to society, student individualization, and a need for students to engage with classroom material.

The progressivist movement still has currency today, particularly within the first theme. The need for the public school to emulate and teach students what is prevalent in modern society continues to be of importance. Schools have placed an emphasis on Smart Technology, using it in classrooms as a teaching tool and as a mode for learning, while computer coding and PC basics are being implemented. This leads to an erosion of the arts and a prominence of the sciences. These changes mirror what has arisen in society.

While seemingly preparing students for their future endeavours, perhaps these changes hint at a bigger concern involving the evolving structure of the education system. A major standpoint of progressivism is the ability for the education system to keep up with society. In this fast-paced modern world, everything changes rapidly and society is in constant flux. If this is so, the education system will also be in constant flux. Perhaps, then, what is most needed is not to be fundamentally progressive but to define what education truly means in this ever-changing world.
Many years ago, I studied political science and economics here at UTvic from 1965-70. Growing up, I had never heard anything about Indian Residential Schools (IRS). When I came back to Canada from graduate school in London, I took a teaching job at a new college in Sault Ste. Marie called Algoma University College.

One of my students was in the American Indian Movement (AIM); he and his wife were Acting Directors of the Keewatinung Anishinaabe Institute that shared the campus with Algoma College. The College was trying to evict the Institute, which seemed wrong to me, since the campus had been an Indian Residential School long before the College arrived. So, I supported him, his wife and one other fellow in a protest in front of the College.

Upon researching, I found that the whole site was actually an Indian Education Trust held by the Anglican Church. The Church had colluded with Algoma College to sell it to the College and provide the white community with a University College for its students and that the Church would keep the money, $600,000. In my mind, this was both immoral and illegal. I pointed that out and, was labelled as a troublemaker for the College, which tried to get rid of me and fired two other faculty members, both visible minorities and supporters of the Indians. I took one of them to the Human Rights Officer in the City, which ended up in a Human Rights Commission ruling against the College. The College’s rationale for its actions was that it was just trying to “Canadianize” the institution, which meant “that the people wanted their children to be taught by people like themselves.”

The 1975 eviction sparked a process for which I had the good fortune as a Canadian educator and activist of being ‘at the right place at the right time’. I saw the cross-cultural partnership between the Native and non-Nation communities as essential for the future of the School, and thus the necessity of educating the College and the community on the Indian Residential School history and legacy to develop it properly.

At first, I thought it would take about ten years, but it took a lot longer. We ended up being a founding movement of what resulted much later in the National Apology that Prime Minister Harper gave in 2008, and the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that followed. Many things we see today started in the late 60’s and early 70’s, and I was lucky to be able to assist because of what I had learned and experienced in Toronto and London in those years.

Essentially, I started working with Indigenous people because I felt the violation too. The process of Healing and Reconciliation from colonialism has just started and has a long, long way to go yet.
Q: How has the history of residential schools affected the course of education in Canada?

We have not yet been able to see how we, historically, have behaved, and affected Indigenous Peoples, locally and globally. We first need to learn about Residential Schools, and then learn about how these institutions negatively affected Indigenous peoples. The Schools’ intent was to take one identity out of a People and put another identity in. Not only have we lost much of the knowledge that Indigenous Peoples have about how they and “we” used to be, in cultural and other life ways. But we’ve also caused death and suffering to countless numbers, while thinking we were doing the right thing. We didn’t think we had anything to learn, or to account for, when we had, and still have, so much to learn and reckon with, we can’t begin to imagine.

Q: Why do you think it is important for future generations to be educated about the history of residential schools?

Well, everybody has to know that we’re all part of it, then and now [the infamous residential school legacy]. Understanding how residential schools work will be a very important clue to the labyrinth of how everything else works -- our own education, conditioning, and “selves” we think we are, included. Why we did what we did, and do what we do. It doesn’t just ‘happen’ to ‘other’ people.

Q: In your opinion, what are some issues that haven’t been discussed enough about residential schools?

Well, until everybody is aware of it... It’s not so much what issues haven’t been discussed, it’s that wherever you are, if it hasn’t been discussed you don’t know about it. I’m immersed in it, so it’s hard for me to judge what somebody else does or doesn’t know. But my suspicion is, right now, that you’re looking at a very, very, very small group of people in Canada that have any idea about this, even many highly ‘educated’ people don’t. And yet, education is, I believe, the only way to go with this – “Healing and Reconciliation through Education”.

Q: But didn’t the teachers who taught at residential schools ask questions regarding the ethics of the system?

No, they were not like “teachers” in the current sense. These were jobs that few people wanted. The government and churches gave them the curriculum. The churches were religious organizations largely trying to convert heathens and save souls. Some were concerned, but as “teachers”, they were strictly regulated -- largely just nice people from their churches, who
thought they were helping the ‘poor’ Indians.

Q: Why do you think the “Remember the Children: National Residential School Photo Identification Project” has been such an appreciated initiative of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (SRSC)?

These children, they didn’t have cameras. When they went to residential schools they had everything taken from them. [They were under complete control, within an institution whose agenda was to extinguish Indigenous identities and memories, individually and collectively]. So now, I go and collect letters and photographs; and they come. They see a letter from their dad or grandma, or they see a photograph of themselves as a child. Where would they ever have seen a photograph of themselves?

Many years ago, I took a bunch of photos up to the northernmost Indian community on the east coast of James Bay. I was showing them. As people were looking at one photo, a woman said to a friend, “Go get Jimmy!” Ten minutes later the woman showed the picture to the man who came and she said, “That’s your mother.” He fell to the ground, crying. His mother was an Indian girl who went to Residential School. When she returned home, she married, and had a child. He was the child, and she had died giving him birth. He had never seen a picture of her. People also identify people in the pictures so we can give them to those who will want them. So, our project helps Residential School Survivors reclaim the spirits that were taken from them as children, and as they do, they start to reclaim their lives, their relationships, their nationhood, and their land. It’s a complex process of reclamation – of ‘putting back what was taken away’, as Traditional Healer and Elder Dan Pine (Shingwauk) Sr. said in 1979.

We’re talking about deep engagement and collaboration to build a movement to make change. It’s not just to get something, it’s to give and share something that we all need to learn and to heal about.

Q: What led to the establishment of the Shingwauk Project?

Dan Pine’s grandfather, Chief Shingwauk (1773-1854) was a very important medicine man, spiritual leader, and political and war chief. He organized and defeated the Americans with
Tecumseh, Brock and others in the War of 1812-14. There would be no Canada without him and those like him. We formally started The Shingwauk Project, named after him, in 1979.

I was the first Director, and still am a co-Director. The objective [from 1976-77] was to formally restore the Native presence to Algoma College because the Indians had been evicted in ’75. The Shingwauk Project did achieve the beginning of restoration at a Thunderbird Ceremony at the Feast of the Dead Day on October 31, 1980, followed by Shingwauk Reunion ’81 in July and August 1981, the first Indian Residential School Reunion that we know of in North America -- 400-450 attended. Since then we’ve held fourteen.

Q: Is there a description on the Shingwauk Project?

Shingwauk had a vision of self-determination because he was fighting to protect Indian land from Americans. After the Americans were defeated in their attempt to take over what later became Canada, the Indians of the Upper Great Lakes had to choose between whether they would stay on the American sides, or maintain an alliance with the British and settle on what later became the Canadian side. Shingwauk decided to maintain his Band’s alliance with the British. This is partly why Canada and the United States are very different in regards to their behaviours and attitudes in regards to Indigenous Peoples. Specifically, Canada formally maintains an alliance with Indigenous Peoples, although it doesn’t actually practice it. Shingwauk’s Vision also included “Teaching Wigwams”, schools that would provide for the incorporation of new knowledge and ways into traditional knowledge and ways – cross-cultural synthesis. The Shingwauk Project is about fulfilling that Vision.

Q: The Project says that it is trying to reflect the goals of “sharing, healing and learning.” How is that done and what are the implications of that?

“Sharing, healing and learning” means that we all help each other, especially people, families and communities that suffer trauma from Residential Schools and colonialism that is inter-generation, and often for many generations. Such historical trauma ultimately reflects a loss of identity, trust, self-esteem and self-determination for individuals and groups. ‘Sharing, healing and learning” means you work together to care and comfort each other while you share your story or “truth”, and learn to identify and understand what has happened to heal or address your problem and what is oppressing you together. Like the Vic saying, “The truth shall make you free.”

The “circle” of sharing, healing and learning penetrates and breaks the “cycle” of fear, hurt and ignorance. You can’t free yourself from something that is oppressing you that you don’t understand. You heal together because you have the support of one another, and the many strengths and resources you have together. In the clan system ‘no one of us is smarter than all of us together’. Thus, sharing, healing or learning circles are very powerful – a form of collective
Q: The Project is also developing curriculum to fulfil cross-cultural goals. Do you think this is a method that should be adapted to other schools?

Yes. I think every school from nursery school to graduate school, needs to change in terms of both content and process of knowledge development and dissemination. Schools are still far too hierarchical and authoritarian, and textbook learning is “factory learning”, a form of memorizing rather than actually knowing. You can be very passive in your education, when someone else tells you what you need to know or think. To be active learners we’ll need and be able to change both the form and the content. Both need to be more inclusive and experience-based. The world is your classroom. Students and teachers should be no more square or strung out than needed. I use a circle format -- everybody has a say, everybody is a teacher and a learner. Teaching and learning must be fun, exciting and reflect respectful and critical engagement with the world.

Q: What does the symbol of the crane that is part of the Shingwauk Project represent?

Chief Shingwauk was of the crane clan. This was his dodem, or totem. A dodem is your spirit ancestor, your spirit relative. Clans, each of a different dodem was how our ancient ancestors identified themselves with their environment and one another in terms of their relatives and roles in life, and also who they married. Cranes are birds that fly great distances, see the world from afar and communicate with strong voices. They also relate to other places and other animals. They are a sky, earth, and water creature and teacher. The crane clan has the responsibility of diplomacy and leadership, especially when engaging other groups. In reference to the image of the crane rising from the water and the land, framed by the sun or moon, the Crane, Chief Shingwauk (“The Pine”), is rising and speaking. It’s an awakening, like a new age.
Sophia Kostanski
Year 1
English and Sociology
Major

The interview conducted with Professor Jackson has taught me so much about residential schools and the history of education. For example, being able to learn more about how experiences from residential schools in the past continue to affect individuals and communities today was something that, prior to this interview, I had never considered. I also enjoyed learning about how the Shingwauk Project has been developing classroom environments that provided cross-cultural education between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

From this interview, I will take away the importance of understanding how we are all connected, and how the experiences of residential schools do not just affect individuals, but communities as well.

Jimmy Qiu
Year 1
French and Social Sciences Major

The interview about Residential schools is very thought-provoking. I am amazed at how topics revolving around this system can closely relate to my life. I see great optimism for the future, but I am not to forget the hardship encountered in the past.
Recently, I was sitting on a bench, along the stone pathway that surrounds the gorgeous Vic Quad in Victoria University. It was bright, sunny, and pleasantly warm that day. Birds crowded near the bench as they scoured for food, while I saw squirrels come and go in the grass. I just happened to be on the bench that was bathed in sunlight. I felt refreshed and relaxed sitting where I was.

Why am I starting this off with something I could do any time of the day, week, or month? As someone who did not visit Toronto often, being a student at UofT has exposed me to this very specific atmosphere, something I internalized that day. As mundane as that day was for me, I just started to think about the wonderful space I was in, the community around me, and living in Toronto. If I had not been a student here, I believe that experience on that bench would have felt very different.

This feeling does not just apply to university. I felt this in my high school as well; this sense of community in an environment where I could make social connections, but also have a meaningful learning experience. This should be the purpose of education. Education is often taken for granted, so it is important to recognize the privilege of it. This is not to say that no one recognizes its importance, it is common to go about the day without consciously thinking about its value. However, sitting on that bench made think, “Wow, this is awesome.”

Education is intrinsically valuable; it reminded me that knowledge of any kind is fundamental to the human experience, and our collective desire to create a lasting legacy. Unlike many other things in our fast-paced modern world that are fleeting, education is something that can never be taken away. Any type of schooling creates an impact that is permanent and cumulative.

Formal education teaches how to learn and how to keep learning, moulding and reshaping your ideas, applying this knowledge to new situations. This process is an upward spiral, which brings new people and new ideas into our circles, broadening horizons.

Education is a lifelong journey with no destination. You may start at one point, but with education, you may go places you never dreamt of. With education, there is no finish line and no one to time you or give you a score. That bench in Vic Quad was my starting point. What’s yours?
The theme for our Fall Issue explores how history connects with education, and it wasn’t until I sat myself down and tried to write my own article that I realized, wow, this theme sure is massive.

There is so much to be said about the history of education - from the events that established education, to the people that shaped it. I feel anything I have to offer has already been said, or said better than I could ever express. On, that note, I want to explore the idea of “past” in a different light; I want to look at how education interplays with our past, who we are as people and our personal self.

The more I go through the education system, the more I find myself questioning its purpose. Am I learning so I can be qualified for a job? Are we educating so students can be productive members of society? Putting my questions on formal education aside, I started to focus on the self that is being educated, paying attention to our innate human desire to learn.

In the past few months I’ve gone down an academic manic, watching TedTalks on everything from the history of human conscious and to why Pinocchio’s nose is brown. I found myself going down a spiral of abstract ideas, listening to some of the world’s most incredibly intelligent thinkers share their passions on philosophy and humanities alike.

Why was I watching these videos voluntarily? Why did I find them so fulfilling? In asking these introspective question, I began to understand the importance of past in education, more specifically our own past.

The past is inextricable from education. Just as we can’t understand how our education system works today, without examining historical events that led to its creation, we can’t understand how our education is changing us, without knowing who we are and where we come from. My past, the experiences I had, the feelings I felt, all shape me into the being I am today. I crave learning about specific ideas because of where I am in my life right now. To make sense of my present, I look to education. Learning guides me to my uncertain future. But without understanding my past, I could never truly find the right type of learning.

In other words, I found meaningful education by looking at my past and how it shaped me into who I am today. By understanding my past, I made sense of my present. Only then was I able to understand what I needed to be fulfilled for my future.

When I apply this to formal education, I am reminded of the importance of student-centered teaching. I experienced transformative education because I was learning about ideas that inspired me, ones that resonated with my being as they addressed my current needs and pushed me to grow just enough and in the ways I wanted. To encourage our students to feel the same, we, as educators, must keep in mind the importance of knowing our students and providing for their needs. The root of meaningful education is understanding yourself, and for me, this is how the past and education interweave.
Well, here I am in fourth year. Do I still love education? Absolutely. Do I want to be a teacher? Of course! However, as I reflect on the past three (and currently fourth) year taking education courses and being in practicums, I’m realizing how far the possibilities of education extend, and I’m starting to develop myself not only as a teacher of the present, but a teacher who will teach for the future. Since my passion lies in special education, I embark on this article thinking about how I, as a future teacher (and researcher) can reimagine special education, and specifically how disability is understood in education.
I’d like to begin with how my views of special education have evolved over the past few years. In first year, I was completely against integrating children with special needs. I thought the integration model segregated students, and essentially led to a hierarchy of students with and without special needs. I was convinced that the more contained special education classrooms were best for students. I thought students could learn alongside their peers, all of whom likely had similar educational needs and goals. Well, my mind has changed. More accurately, it continues to change. I’ve realized that special education cannot be understood as an “either-or” model; integrated versus contained classrooms is reductionist, and it doesn’t challenge teachers to make their classrooms as equitable as possible. The goal of classroom equity is what has challenged me to think about special education as not a responsibility or obligation of special education teachers. It is a responsibility all teachers have and should embrace. This means thinking about both practical and theoretical conceptualizations of what special education means, what disability in education means, and how these both shape the lives all of our students lead.

On the note of classroom equity, it is fair to say that there are many ways a classroom can be equitable. Equity means anti-oppressive education; it means culturally-relevant education; it means anti-racist education. Equitable education, however, also means education that is accessible, and I’ve learned that all teachers can anticipate and prepare for accessible education. Further, where there is accessible education, there are no limits to education – only possibilities.

On the note of access, limits, and the responsibilities of teachers, consider some examples of how teachers of the present and future can welcome the possibilities of disability in the classroom. For instance, the way a teacher sets up her classroom makes way for either possibility or limit. Regardless of whether a teacher knows she has, say, a blind student in her class, she should make handouts and classroom posters in large font. For an older class, she might consider starting the year with a discussion of accessibility: What does access mean? Who gets to have access and who doesn’t? Why are certain environments inaccessible? Teachers cannot be afraid of bringing special education, disability, and accessibility into the classroom. Special education, specifically disability, reflects the lives and experiences of our students. These lives should never be silenced, nor should they be forgotten.

Having made clear that the lives of disabled students or students in special education must never be forgotten, I arrive at the main substance of this short article: seeing disability as possibility. This is not the same as “from disability to possibility.” I urge teachers to consider that disability already signifies possibility. As Anne McGuire explains in her book, War on Autism, even the language we use places disability as within a person; as a condition with which they must live (McGuire, 2016). This view of disability (and by extension, special education) is problematic. Further, when we see disability as a condition to eliminate through education, how is special education in any way beneficial? How does disability as a condition of the student in fact act as a barrier to success?

I recognize that these questions are big. No, they are huge. They are largely theoretical and rather overwhelming, especially for preservice teachers. Nevertheless, I encourage all teachers to return to the earlier example of equity through accessibility as a first step in seeing the possibility of disability within education. When teachers anticipate disability, not only do they differentiate their instruction, but they change the culture of their classrooms. When we change classroom cultures and expectations, we change how disability is understood. Most importantly, disability moves from a condition to be accommodated for towards a life that is welcomed and included.

References
When discussing the idea of education, I can’t help but think of learning experiences that happen outside of the classroom - I’m talking about field trips. Field trips are one of those subjects that blur the line between an “educational experience” and a “play day.” Frankly, why can’t it be both? The impact these adventures have on today’s eager learners is incredibly influential, memorable, and just plain fun.

Before I launch into a nostalgic tale about one of my best field trips, I will take a step back and think about life in classrooms. There are traditional approaches to teaching, where teachers instruct at the head of the classroom, and there are child-centred approaches too. When teachers generate a positive environment for discussion and conversation, impactful learning occurs. Students are encouraged to think and challenge ideas that may have never crossed their minds. The mere presence of a teacher in a classroom generates such an impactful response from students which is demonstrative of active learning. Though this may seem like an antiquated approach to education, the authority figure of the teacher creates a human bond that simply cannot be replaced by alternative electronic tools. Then there is the integration of technological learning tools in the classroom, such as tablets and laptops, certainly affect today’s modern learners; however, it is important to emphasize that these technologies should enhance rather than substitute teaching. Though it can be beneficial for teachers to use these tools in the classroom as visual aids, sometimes taking a break from the classroom is just as productive. Field trips not only aid students with learning about a topic, but provide students with an opportunity to actually experience what they are learning. Sometimes this exposure makes all the difference.

When I was in fourth grade, my Social Studies class was learning about the Middle Ages. We learned about the feudal system, the Magna Carta, and the daily lives of people. On paper, the era seemed interesting enough, but was certainly difficult for a group of eleven-year-olds to relate to. Vivid illustrations in our textbook depicted jousting, but when my class actually visited Medieval Times, the sport came to life and an even more vivid memory remained with us. Watching the knights (my class was the green team) ride their horses and play the sport that was explained to us, changed the way I perceived the subject. As my class cheered for the green knight, I remember glimpsing at my teacher, and seeing them join the excitement. Since an actual jousting match could not take place in our classroom, our class was able to have the experience outside of the class. This experience provided students with a realistic depiction of history. Brief excursions like this combine lessons with recreation, which ultimately allows learning to happen in a limitless way. When education occurs in such an evolved way, amazing things happen.
Imagine a high school with no fixed deadlines, creating a schedule of what you want to do each day, and spending time in classrooms with students from all grades simultaneously.

That was essentially my experience in secondary school, an education system known as self-directed learning. I attended one of the two schools in Ontario that embraces this independent learning system, and believe me, explaining this system is quite complicated; to explain it and actually study in this school environment are two different things. I digress, even after attending the school’s open house, I was still confused as to how the system worked. However, here is my attempt to illuminate to you, the reader, what self-directed learning education was like for me.
First, what is self-directed learning? It is a type of education where you take initiative and the responsibility of your own learning, with or without the assistance of others, work at your own pace, devise your individual goals, and seek resources that best suit your interests and needs. Everything becomes your decision in terms of how and what you want to learn – in other words, you are given the opportunity to define your individual, unique learning experience. As a result, self-directed learning varies drastically from traditional schools. In the traditional system, educators teach you every period and assign daily homework, whereas in the self-directed learning system teachers are present in the classroom, observing students and helping anyone who approaches them; otherwise, students sit in the classroom and do independent or group work.

So, with no set timetable for regular daily classes, as in a traditional school, how do you learn? You learn by completing unit packages. In my school, every course consists of 18 units where these unit packages may contain reflection questions, textbook work, or presentations. There are no fixed due dates for these units but “target” dates, which are the recommended dates to hand in your units – generally every two weeks – to the teacher in order to stay on track. You can write your test anytime within the span of six days as well as choose when you want to write your exam.

No deadlines and you do not get penalized if you hand in your work after the “target” date? There must be a catch – and that catch is your willingness to learn and do the work designed to enhance your understanding. As I described above, it is up to you to complete the assignments on time. Self-directed learning prepares you to adapt to the university learning environment of taking charge of your learning and progress; responsibility, self-motivation, and self-initiative are thus fundamental to success. Through this self-directed learning system, you can fast-track and complete your secondary education early; but be warned with no strict deadlines, it is all too easy to fall into the notorious pattern of procrastination.

Additionally, teachers give weekly or biweekly lectures depending on the courses you take, similar to university, during seminar block periods – each about one or two hours long – to expound on key concepts in the unit and clarify any questions you may have. Otherwise, in place of a set timetable schedule, students create their personal schedule of where and what they want to work on each day. You will often find yourself working in a classroom mixed with students of all grades since we use subject departments open to all grade 9-12 students. This integration of students offers a unique experience to mingle, support, and build affiliation with others.

As well, every teacher in the school is a TA, a Teacher Advisor, who is responsible for keeping track of the attendance of a student group, following up on their progress, and is essentially their mentor. They conduct biweekly “TA Interviews” where you can talk to your TA about your learning development, struggles you are facing, and intended goals for the coming two weeks (when you are going to hand in your assignments, do your tests, etc.). Their main priority is ensuring that you get the most out of your learning experience and are able to achieve your goals. They may propose time management strategies or ways to relieve your stress; however, you hold the final decision of what pace you will work at to accomplish your goals and learn best.

Self-directed learning is not for everyone. We all have diverse learning styles in which some of us may prefer the traditional school setting due to the structured classroom environment and comfort in having teachers guide our learning. I digress; there were days when I wished I studied at a traditional school system as I missed learning through daily lectures. Meanwhile, some of us work better when left to our own devices; we may prefer the process of taking initiative of our own work to finish early, on time, or later – some may opt to do a fifth year to finish our studies or explore a broader range of subjects to identify our interests. This unique learning system is designed to enhance your time management, organizational skills, exercise your independence, and ultimately, let you take initiative of your learning experience.
Differentiated instruction has revolutionized our education system. This new-age style of teaching no longer creates citizens fit for an assembly line but rather encourages citizens ripe for an innovative tech start-up. As teachers, we are told that differentiated instruction is the holy grail of our education system today. And it is, but I think it is important to remember that teaching to the direct needs of the student is by no means a new concept. Teachers who taught in one-room schoolhouses often had to adjust to so many different students all of different grade levels. One-room schoolhouses in Canada were the norm beginning in the 17th century and continuing on until the late twentieth century. Towns with one room schoolhouses were small and the students almost always knew the teacher outside of school. Creating a sense of community outside of school was not necessary and creating opportunities for self-expression inside the classroom was of low importance since the students already knew each other outside of the classroom. Because a teacher in a one-room school house was often known to the community, it meant that s/he could differentiate their teaching without even noticing it. The teacher in a one-room schoolhouse was responsible for teaching students of all different styles and abilities. This same idea is now prevalent in our classrooms today. While it is of course paramount to teach to our students’ strengths and value the importance of differentiated instruction, it is still important to remember that differentiated teaching has been around longer than we sometimes remember. If teachers hundreds of years ago can differentiate their instruction, today we can do it too and create environments where our students succeed.

Of course, what is perhaps left out of my analysis of differentiated instruction, returning to my previous statement is the sense of community that was already established within past classrooms. Today, differentiated instruction may not mean that we have to teach two or three different grades. It means we really get to know our students. We often have to teach to different socioeconomic backgrounds, which greatly impacts a child’s experience (and even access) to positive schooling experiences. Ultimately, teachers today have to motivate all of their students, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, and ability. This motivation is reflected in how teachers give their students voice, and show them that their experiences and differences are not only heard, but are actively accommodated for by teachers who love, care for, and nurture their students.

Works Cited
Education in the past
was just another type of cast.

Students were treated like gold,
shaped by the same old mold,
doing everything as they were told
because there wasn’t an option to be bold -
they were in line to be sold
to the society that thought they could define
what skills and traits and people are divine,
and that, to aspiring educators, should not be fine.

Students were treated like gems,
differentiated because of their size or colours,
but that’s exactly what education today condemns -
not one type should be valued over others,
not only diamonds can be used in a ring,
ruby, sapphire, and jade can be bling.

Education shouldn’t set restrictions
nor should it be a set of prescriptions
for what should be people’s missions.

I’d like to think of education as cooking:
it’s fine to not end up with the same dishes,
but the products must be mouth-watering,
because anything can be made delicious.

I’d like to think of teachers as utensils:
we come in unique shapes, functions, and styles.

I’d like to think of students as snacks:
they can be mass produced or homemade,
with all types, tastes, textures and obviously special knacks
which, if fostered, will never fade.

Education in the past
was just another type of cast;
Education today
is paving the way

for the better future,

future where differences and diversity are honoured,
future where individuality is favoured.
One quote I live by is: “The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts.” -- C.S. Lewis

**Cassie Fast**

My favourite grade was grade one with Mr Feeney!

**Maddy DeWelles**

The purpose of education is to show children the multiple paths that are available for them to pursue, and help them prepare for whichever one(s) they choose.

**Natalie Sanchez**

One thing that I loved about the way I was schooled was that I was privileged to have supportive teachers, as well as intellectual teachers who prepared me with some practices in university teaching.

**Alisha Rao**

I want the classroom and the school to be more of a physically active space.

**Elizabeth Parker**
My favourite subject in school was any class where I felt welcomed and cared about. My relationships with my teachers and classmates could help me love anything from English to economics, from history to science, as long as what we did, we did together.

**Mehak Jamil**

One quote I live by is: “I urge you to please notice when you are happy, and exclaim or murmur or think at some point, ‘If this isn’t nice, I don’t know what is.’”

-- Kurt Vonnegut

**Brittany Yuen**

One thing that we can learn from schools of the past is that education is for everyone and knowledge is never complete; teachers are students as much as students are teachers. We can all learn a little from everybody.

**Joselyn Wong**

One quote I live by is: “You can sleep when you’re dead.”

**Magdalene Stravou**

One thing that I loved about the way I was schooled was that I was encouraged and given the space to think.

**Rija Saleem**
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